



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 19, 2000

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PREPARED REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN SPENCE AT FLOOR CONSIDERATION OF H.RES. 631

Yesterday, during floor consideration of H.Res. 631 – a resolution honoring the members of the crew of the guided missile destroyer U.S.S. Cole (DDG-67) who were killed or wounded in the recent terrorist bombing attack in Aden, Yemen – Chairman Spence made the following prepared remarks:

“Mr. Speaker, it is with a profound sense of sadness that I join my colleague, Ike Skelton, in offering this resolution for consideration by the House.

Last Thursday, October 12, 2000, a small boat exploded alongside the U.S.S. *Cole* during a brief refueling stop in the port of Aden in Yemen. The blast ripped a 40 by 45 foot hole in her side, killing 17 sailors and wounding some three dozen more.

This unprovoked and cowardly act of terrorism was perpetrated against an American warship while en route to the Persian Gulf to conduct maritime operations in the legitimate pursuit of our national security interests abroad.

The resolution before the House condemns this senseless act of violence against our military forces and expresses the sympathies of the House of Representatives to the families of those crew members who were killed or wounded in the attack.

Mr. Speaker, as we meet today, hundreds of thousands of young Americans from all corners of our great Nation are serving in the military, overseas and here at home. They go about their daily duty quietly and without fanfare. Yet, until something like this happens, we as a Nation tend to forget what they do every day of the year to uphold our values, protect our freedom, and deter those who seek to do us harm.

Mr. Speaker, we too often forget that freedom is not free.

The resolution before us today appropriately recognizes and honors the price of freedom paid by the members of the crew of the U.S.S. *Cole*.

(MORE)

We are free and secure as a Nation today because the men and women of our military have fought to gain our freedom and independence. Since the Revolutionary War, these men and women have gone all over this world in both war and peace to defend that freedom.

Today, we honor the men and women of the U.S.S. Cole, and their families, who paid the price for freedom. Every day, we should remember that the price of freedom has been paid by others – all those before who paid the price with their lives, their limbs, their health, as prisoners of war, and who may still be missing in action today.

Mr. Speaker, we are gathered here on this very solemn occasion to honor all those who have paid the price for our freedom. How can we honor them? What can we say? What can we do?

As a Nation, it is our duty to assure the families of the young men and women killed and injured aboard the U.S.S. Cole, and all the other members of our armed forces today, that their sacrifices are for a noble and worthy cause: Freedom.

Many of us have used the word “freedom” many times today. And some might wonder, what does that have to do with it? I believe that freedom is what it is all about. The young men and women who serve our country today and those who served in the past have not only given us our freedom – they defend it every day all over this world at great sacrifice.

Some wonder why some of us are so strong for national defense – freedom is why. Freedom is so important; without freedom, we would not have the environment necessary to deal with all the other problems we have in this country. First, we must have our freedom. In a free society we can go about dealing with the rest of our problems. Yet, every day we take for granted what other people before us have done to provide and defend freedom for all Americans, many of whom have not faced with paying their price.

Every day let us honor the people of the U.S. military, not just one day, every so often, when these kinds of things happen. We should every day pay honor to those who have given us our very freedom.”

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